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Addresses and  
Outlines on  
strategical  
background... 1944

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Strategical background prior to the Battle of LEYTE GULF

Gentlemen-- Today I plan to amplify the remarks made at the National War College on the subject of the strategy on both sides preceding the Battle of LEYTE GULF. In Washington, I merely pointed out the immediate strategical considerations preceding this battle. Here, I plan to start at an earlier period to point out the relentless pressure of the Allied forces on Japan, and to show how the Allied strategy was conceived and applied. On the other hand, I plan to show how the Japanese strategists thought and what considerations motivated their strategical conceptions.

It will be remembered that the Allied plan for the movement across the Pacific called for the Allied approach to be made from two directions, one from HAWAII--the other from AUSTRALIA. These formed a pair of gigantic nut crackers, with the PHILIPPINES and, especially MINDANAO, as the nut.

It will be seen from the diagram that the operations across the Pacific were essentially naval. This was particularly so in those phases where the islands seized were small, and where the troops on shore were operating generally under the guns of the fleet. Therefore, the essential element of the movement across the Pacific was the strength of the fleet. The ability to seize island after island, such as ENIWETOK and PELELIU, or to capture bases on major islands, such as HOLLANDIA on NEW GUINEA, was a direct result of the superiority of Allied naval power over that

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of the Japanese. As this superiority in naval power increased, the Japanese chance of success correspondingly diminished, for the comparative strength of naval power varies as the square of the numbers of similar ships. Therefore, the comparative reduction of Japanese strength was, in fact, much greater than the number of ships of different types would indicate. This law of N2, if realized by the Japanese, might have caused them to have engaged in surface action much earlier than they did.

As it was, as the Japanese strength diminished not only thru damage and destruction but also thru inability to replace shipping as rapidly as could the Allies, the ability of the Allies to move across the Pacific from the south and from the east became pronounced. The enemy fought fiercely in defense of his atoll and island bases but Allied naval power denied him the ability to support them, so that, in no case, did he succeed in repulsing the Allied forces. The Japanese, except in rare cases thru submarines, were generally unable to supply or reinforce their bypassed atolls and bases. They were forced to leave their garrisons there to suffer thru starvation, and thru Allied neutralization bombings and shellings, as they had to do at WOTJE, RABAU and TAROA. What these Japanese garrisons thought of being beyond the range of naval support is not known, but it is assumed that thru meditation they became converts of sea power and became convinced that a nation with outlying possessions which does not place its reliance on adequate sea power is lost!

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The Allied strategy was to seize those islands and island bases which appeared essential to their plan, and to by-pass those strongly held intervening ones, which did not appear essential.

I plan to start my discussion of the Pacific strategy with the American attack on TRUK, as TRUK was the heart of the Japanese perimeter defense system, both to the east and to the south. For TRUK flanked any possible strikes to the PHILIPPINES from the east and from the south. The removal of TRUK as a menace therefore became as important to Comsowespac (General MacArthur) as to CincPoa (Admiral Nimitz). The objectives of the attack on TRUK were, among other things --

- (a) The destruction of a portion of the Japanese fleet reportedly in that atoll,
- (b) The reduction of the security value of TRUK as a base for the Japanese Fleet. Heretofore, General MacArthur's operations in the SOLOMONS had been seriously affected by Japanese Fleet units based at TRUK. Likewise, Allied moves to the west might be so affected by this bastion.

TRUK was therefore attacked most successfully on 1944 so that the Japanese Commander-in-Chief decided it was unsafe and to stop employing it as a base for major fleet units.

Pacific strategy next dictated that as TRUK had been made of doubtful value to the Japanese Fleet, it should be followed by attacks on PALAU. Therefore, attacks were launched on this base

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with objectives as follows:

- (a) The destruction of the Japanese heavy units reported there, and,
- (b) The denial of the use of the harbor to enemy fleet and other units thru the mining of its channels and the destruction of its facilities.

These attacks were highly successful in making this base untenable for major fleet units. TRUK and PALAU now became less and less dangerous and were no longer used by the Japanese as fleet bases. This changed Japanese strategy. No suitable harbors for the basing of fleet units strong enough to oppose General MacArthur's HOLLANDIA operation, and within a suitable radius, were now available to the Japanese from the north or from the east. The nearest suitable bases were really in the PHILIPPINES themselves.

Let us now examine the Allied moves from the east. With PALAU and TRUK rendered more or less untenable for fleet units and with SAIPAN, TINIAN and GUAM, in Allied hands, the Allied line of communication from the MARSHALLS was not seriously threatened from either the north or the south. However, fleet bases were desired for the movement against MINDANAO, which, as stated previously, was the objective of the pincer movement, and additional air fields were required to cover Allied forces in the area and to neutralize those bases still in Japanese hands, which might affect adversely Allied movements. It was therefore

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decided to seize PELELIU, YAP and ULITHI. PELELIU and YAP were desired as air bases, and ULITHI as a fleet base.

The Allied move from the south, under General MacArthur, was moving north from the SOLOMONS and NEW GUINEA with physical objectives, TALAUD and MOROTAI. HOLLANDIA, BIAK and CAPE SANSAPOR had already fallen. TALAUD and MOROTAI were now desired for the establishment of air fields, from which MINDANAO could be attacked by air and to isolate Japanese forces on HALMAHERA.

In accordance with these objectives, the 3rd Fleet under Admiral Halsey, had been making air strikes on MINDANAO to neutralize the bases from which Japanese aircraft might interfere with projected Allied operations. These air strikes disclosed an unexpected air weakness in MINDANAO, so, Commander 3rd Fleet decided to strike in the Central PHILIPPINES on 12 September. He encountered very little opposition. He therefore recommended that the operations for seizing YAP and PELELIU be cancelled and that LEYTE be seized immediately. Admiral Nimitz replied that PELELIU would be taken and that YAP would be reconsidered. PELELIU, therefore, fell on 14 September and MOROTAI on 15 September. Admiral Nimitz advised General MacArthur of Commander 3rd Fleet's recommendation.

On 14 September, General MacArthur concurred with the plan to abandon the assault on YAP. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, who were at the Quebec conference on this date, charged General MacArthur

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with the carrying out of the landings on, and the occupation and defense of LEYTE. The target date was set as October 20th. Thus Commander 3rd Fleet, thru an intelligent evaluation of all information and a readiness to recommend a change in the basic plan, had succeeded in advancing the date for the capture of LEYTE by two months.

The decision to accelerate the advance into the LEYTE area was important for future operations as the LEYTE area provided airfields and extensive harbor and naval base facilities. It had a free undefended approach from the east, had sufficient anchorage areas and commanded the approaches to the VISAYAN Islands thru SURIGAO Strait. There was one serious drawback about October landings, however, This was "rainy weather". It was the rainy season which began about the time set for the landings. However, the strategical considerations were so important as to force acceptance of the rain effect.

As for Japan, its strategy changed from month to month as the relentless push of the Allies forced her to new decisions. Prior to the Doolittle raid on TOKYO, the Japanese planners had been a little over-confident. They felt that the Navy could hold the western Pacific without much help, if any, from the Army. After that raid they decided that their perimeter should be extended to reach as far as MIDWAY to the east and to occupy the ALEUTIANS, SAMOA and NEW CALEDONIA. After the Japanese defeat in the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway, Japanese demands

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shrunk. This was because at Midway the Japanese had lost two carrier divisions including their best trained pilots. In addition, thru the attrition of the battles of the SOLOMONS the Japanese had lost additional surface ships and aircraft which could ill be spared. By August 1943, Admiral Koga, the CinC Combined Fleet, enunciated a policy which indicated that Japan was on the defensive. This meant that Japan planned to defend the areas which she had won. He therefore based the Fleet at TRUK, prepared to battle for the GILBERTS and MARSHALLS as well as for the SOLOMONS. His air cover for his surface forces, should he decide to fight a major battle, would be supplied by the Base Air Forces.

Admiral Koga established a system of so-called "interception zones" which consisted of systems of bases from which Japanese forces would operate to destroy enemy invasion groups. The center of each zone was an advance base with adequate A/A and A/S defense. Within these zones were groups of bases. Each group of bases had at its center an air base. These centers were to be about 300 miles apart so that planes could readily fly from one to the other. Each zone and group of bases was to be strongly defended. This would free the Combined Fleet and Base Air Forces from the requirement of defense so that they could engage in mobile operations.

He then established "Z" operations to meet any Allied threat. This merely meant that the Combined Fleet would move to the support of any "interception zone" challenged within the Central Pacific.

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He established "Y" operations for the defense of the southwest area. Any Allied forces which crossed a line, TIMOR, SUNDA, JAVA, SUMATRA, ANDAMAN Islands, would be met by all of the available forces of the Combined Fleet.

However, these plans did not work. For when the Allies landed in the GILBERTS, the Combined Fleet had suffered such losses at RABAU and had been forced to leave so many light craft in the SOLOMONS that it was unable to come to the defense of the islands there.

After the fall of the GILBERTS and MARSHALLS the defense of the CAROLINES and MARIANAS became of great concern. In May 1944, Admiral Toyoda who had succeeded Admiral Koga, formulated a plan to dispose military strength so as to be able to envelop and destroy the enemy fleet in decisive action after the latter part of May. This plan was called the "A" operations and superseded the Z operations of Admiral Koga. However, Admiral Toyoda did not plan to fight such a decisive action until his military strength was available. He planned to have the first mobile fleet stand by in the Central and Southern PHILIPPINES and to deploy the 1st Air Fleet in the MARIANAS, the PHILIPPINES, HALMAHERA and Western NEW GUINEA. He also planned to endeavor to bring the Allies to action as near as possible to the standby area of the First Mobile Fleet. The Central Pacific was of primary concern. He also designated "Y" operations against attack from the southwest. Air strength from the PHILIPPINES

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and Japan would be committed as reinforcements for the SW area Fleet. Under some conditions the 1st Mobile Fleet would fight.

With the successful invasion of the MARIANAS and the failure of the Japanese Fleet in the Battle of the PHILIPPINE SEA, the Japanese found it necessary to make new plans. They therefore established a new line of defense, PHILIPPINE Islands, FORMOSA, RYUKYU Islands, JAPANESE MAINLAND, HOKKAIDO, and KURILE Islands, and they designated the defense operations of this line of defense as the "Sho" operations. They divided this defense area into 4 subdivisions:

- Sho #1 - PHILIPPINE Islands area
- 2 - FORMOSA and RYUKYU area
- 3 - JAPANESE MAINLAND area
- 4 - HOKKAIDO and KURILES area

It will be noted that neither PALAU or HALMAHERA is included in this list. This was because the defense of these areas, thru fleet action, would be too costly and even then it would probably be unsuccessful, as few supporting islands of strength were nearby.

Strategically speaking, the Japanese were working under difficulties. There was a shortage of stockpiles of vital materials, and especially oil in the Empire. This meant that the PHILIPPINES had to be held at all costs.

Japan had estimated that, after the occupation of the MARIANAS, PALAU and HALMAHERA would be occupied in mid-September and the PHILIPPINES in mid-November, probably in MINDANAO.

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Japan's strategy for October was then to use all available land based aircraft to delay the Allied invasion of the PHILIPPINES by destroying Allied Striking Forces by the use of air power. No surface forces were to be used until the intent of the Allies to land in the PHILIPPINES had become apparent.

It will be noted that all of these Japanese defense operations are based primarily on sea power. Plans always provided for action by surface and air forces, but little attention was paid to the Army garrisons. These garrisons were exhorted to fight to the end and thus to slow down the Allied advance, but little attempt was made to reinforce them as they were only a small part of the great overall plan. The way to destroy the Allied fleet and air power was thru naval and air action represented by sea power and it was on sea power, relatively feeble though it was, that the Japanese finally placed their trust for the primary defense of the PHILIPPINES against invasion. The Battle for LEYTE GULF was the result of this strategy.

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## Outline of Tentative Battle Lessons

### Battle for Leyte Gulf

1. Orders to Covering Force should be more explicit.
2. Operations of Covering Shore and Tender Based Air Should be provided the CTF in more detail.
3. Necessary arrangements, including shipping, should be made to ensure earliest deployment of shore-based air.
4. Adequate facilities to provide ample rapid communication channels should be established. Example - RDO Guam.
5. Recognition of own and enemy forces should be stressed.  
Example- contact reports by China-based air searches and Manila Bay TBM shot down by Allied Forces in Leyte Gulf Oct 21st.
6. Coordination between artillery and naval gunfire support and support aircraft.
7. Conservative bombardment and fire support procedures. Much ammunition was wasted by area firing at unknown targets.
8. More briefing and coordination between attack force commander and covering force commander in regard to supporting air strikes in the objective area.
9. More complete intelligence regarding beach defense and hydrographic details.
10. More complete understanding and cooperation between the amphibious attack group and unit commander, the Army Shore Party Commander, and Navy Beachmasters concerning organization of personnel and unloading facilities.

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11. Closer gunfire support to UDT teams, particularly with automatic weapons such as 40mm guns. How about the employment of fast LCI(R)s and LCI(G)s in the Advance Force for this purpose?
12. Adequate equipment in the amphibious task force to cover all contingencies, Example - amphibious tractors, LSTs and pontoon barges and causeways.
13. Improvement of aircraft and pilot replenishment program for fast carrier force. Also, transfer of large caliber ammo. and bombs at sea during fuel replenishment.
14. Assignment and rotation of gunfire support vessels should be made by the Commander Bombardment and Fire Support Group.
15. Positive control of antiaircraft fire, particularly automatic weapons.
16. In landing operations that take place concurrently on adjacent or nearby beaches the overall control and direction of the TCAP should be retained by the amphibious task force commander.
17. A number of minesweepers should be allotted by the Commander Advance Force to Commander Harbor Entrance Control to be stationed at the seaward entrance of the swept channel to make a tactical sweep ahead of incoming units of amphibious attack force.
18. Air cover and protection over the objective area should be provided on a twenty-four hour basis and not only during daylight, with arrangements for night cover based on a flimsy catch as catch can basis as was done at Leyte.

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19. Instructions for air searches should be specific to avoid misinterpretation and duplication by subordinate commanders.

Example - COMTHIRDFLT's search instructions to CTGs 38.1 and 38.2 Oct 17th.

20. Military commanders should follow the chain of command in issuing their orders. Example - COMTHIRDFLT usually by-passed CTF 38.

21. Intentions vs. Capabilities (Japanese Fleet reaction to be limited to Tokyo Express)

22. Reconnaissance of Lingga-Singapore area by Ceylon-based B-29s.

23. Concise and Accurate post-battle reports to improve future tactics and to permit the fleet commanders to properly evaluate their subordinates.

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area had been cancelled by Commander Support Aircraft Central Philippines, which information was not received by CTF 78.

The above confusion was caused by (a) improper coordination, planning and briefing by the representatives of the amphibious task force commander (CTF 77) and the covering force commander (COMTHIRDFLT), (b) inadequate communication facilities and (c) not insuring that coordinate commanders had received vital information that had changed the overall plan, and in particular their own plans.

LESSON:

In any operation requiring the coordination of two or more separate forces (for example, an amphibious task force and a covering force), the pre-planning and briefing must be done in sufficient detail to provide for the proper execution of the assigned tasks within the scope and limitation of the communication facilities available.

12. In conducting the study and analysis of the Battle for Leyte Gulf considerable difficulty, resulting in the expenditure of much time and effort, was caused by inaccurate, incomplete and carelessly prepared post-battle reports (war diaries, action reports, deck logs, messages, etc.) and in some cases, various commands did not even submit a report. Very few commanders submitted any recommended battle lessons or explained their reasons for making certain decisions or taking certain actions. Many flag files containing important messages, particularly their times of receipt by the various top commanders, have been located only after conducting an exhaustive search, or not at all. Consequently, a timely study and analysis of the Battle for Leyte Gulf in the endeavor to

improve tactics and the professional judgment of future naval officers has been made unnecessarily difficult.

LESSON:

Emphasis must be placed on the importance of submitting timely, concise and accurate post-battle reports in order to (a) improve plans, strategy and tactics of the immediate future, based on valuable experience of the past, (b) permit fleet commanders to properly evaluate their subordinates, and (c) improve the education and professional judgment of future naval officers. Battle lessons for future application can only be derived from the study and analysis of past experience that is supplemented by complete and correct factual information.

13. In the operation plan for the Battle for Leyte Gulf the manner of assigning and rotating the gunfire support vessels after D-day was not clearly specified. Consequently, in regard to the Southern Beach area, the assignment and rotation was done jointly by Commander Bombardment and Fire Support Group (CTG 77.2) and Commander Southern Attack Force (CTF 79). CTF 79, (a) made the assignment and rotation of destroyers in TF 79 and TG 77.2 by number and name in order to provide for an equal expenditure of bombardment ammunition in the gunfire support and screening destroyers and (b) designated by type and number the battleships and cruisers required from TG 77.2 by his two amphibious task groups (TGs 79.1 and 79.2) while the actual assignment by ship name was made by CTG 77.2. Consequently, the gunfire support and screening destroyers did not have a single common agency to handle their assignment and rotation,

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which (a) resulted in a duplication in the matter of maintaining records of the status of their ammunition and locations, (b) increased the communications required and (c) burdened the Southern Attack Force Commander, who already had enough other problems with which to contend, with the additional task of running the screen and gunfire support destroyers.

LESSON:

In amphibious operations, the Bombardment and Fire Support Commander should be given exclusive responsibility and authority to assign all gunfire support vessels as requested by the amphibious task force or task group commanders, and in order to allow for an even expenditure of ammunition by the rotation of screening and gunfire support vessels he should in addition be given control of all screening vessels in the objective area that might be used as gunfire support ships. The following advantages would accrue from this arrangement: (a) All gunfire support and screening vessels would have a single common agency to handle their assignments and rotation, (b) Ammunition levels would be controlled by a single command, (c) a minimum of communications would be required and (d) the amphibious task force commander would have more freedom for the broader exercise of command.

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14. During the morning of October 19th the UDT units conducting reconnaissance off the Northern Beaches received intense and sporadic small arms, mortar and light artillery fire, which resulted in a number of casualties. This incident was caused by the fact that (a) the supporting close-range bombardment by the destroyers was limited to fifteen instead of thirty minutes as called for in the plan and (b) the destroyers instead of closing to three thousand yards as planned, remained too far off shore for the maximum effective employment of their forty-millimeter guns, their best weapon for eliminating troop concentrations and enemy small arms and mortar fire on the beaches. So intense was the nature of the enemy fire that one UDT team had to be withdrawn to resume reconnaissance operations in the afternoon, after the enemy light batteries had been silenced by intensive fire from the battleships, destroyers and APDs

LESSON:

In amphibious operations, thorough beach reconnaissance by the UDT teams might be of such vital importance to the success of the landings that maximum close air and gunfire support should be given to the underwater demolition teams. Consideration should be given to the employment in the Advance Force of rocket and mortar gunboats (LSM(R)s and LSM(G)s), to cover the UDT teams in view of their shallow draft and their ability to provide large volumes of in-close supporting fires.

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The Leyte operation marked the first time that the SOWESPAC and CINCPAC commands had merged in their drives across the Pacific toward Japan. The seizure and occupation of Leyte was an important stepping stone embracing great strategical and political significance to COM-SOWESPAC. This was his biggest operation thus far and for it he had committed a major portion of his forces. The defeat of his forces at Leyte would have been a severe setback. On the other hand, CINCPAC had considered the Leyte operation as another rung in the ladder leading to the overall defeat of Japan, and to him the annihilation of the enemy fleet any time the chance occurred or could be created was just as vital as the capture of Leyte, since without their fleet the enemy would be helpless and the Allied fleet could then operate with impunity. Therefore, he stressed the importance of destroying the enemy fleet in formulating his operation plans. For instance, he had emphasized the destruction of the enemy fleet not only in paragraph (3) of his basic plan for the Leyte operation, but also in the corresponding paragraph for the earlier Palau operation. In each case, the instructions were verbatim, which indicates that this procedure was apparently standard in formulating CINCPAC plans.

LESSON:

In any operation the orders concerning the Covering Force should be specific enough to prevent the Covering Force Commander from conducting his covering and support operations too remote from the objective area. This limitation on the operating radius of the covering force from the objective area would assure its availability to cope with any enemy operations threatening the successful accomplishment of the primary task.

## BATTLE LESSONS

1. CINCPOA in paragraph 3 (x) of his Operation Plan No. 8-44, his basic plan for the employment of CINCPOA forces in support of the Leyte operation, directed that in case an opportunity for the destruction of a major portion of the enemy fleet offered or could be created, such destruction would become the primary task. The inclusion of this task as applicable to all POA forces, especially COMTHIRDFLT, is questioned. This task was in conflict with the overall mission assigned POA forces in paragraph 2 of CINCPOA's basic plan directing the forces of the Pacific Ocean Areas to cover and support forces of the Southwest Pacific in order to assist in the seizure and occupation of objectives in the Central Philippines. In addition, it was in conflict with paragraph 3(a) which directed Western Pacific Task Forces to destroy enemy naval and air forces threatening the Philippines area and to protect air and sea communications along the Central Pacific axis. Should the destruction of the enemy fleet, whether or not it might be in a threatening position, be a primary task having priority over protecting the Allied forces at the objective area, particularly the critical assault shipping? Such instructions might be applicable to COMSUBPAC, but certainly not COMTHIRDFLT, because they authorized him to seek and destroy any major element of the Japanese fleet while leaving unprotected the SEVENTH Fleet assault forces in the objective area should he so choose, thereby giving him wide latitude in the manner of conducting his cover and support operations. A strict interpretation of paragraph 3(x) might allow him to be drawn away from the objective area by diversionary tactics of the enemy fleet.

been in the event that the excess planes might have been needed to repel a surprise enemy air or surface attack.

LESSONS:

(a) Search sectors should be clearly designated by degrees rather than by points of the compass, and the type of search, relative or geographical, should be specified.

(b) Commanders should conform to the chain of command in issuing their orders so as to achieve unity of effort through their subordinate commanders. Also, a fleet or task force commander should refrain as much as possible from running the details of his task groups or units, lest he become so involved as to lose sight of the primary or overall objective or mission. Such a procedure deprives the subordinate commanders of the opportunity to exercise their own initiative, which is a basic element in their training for higher command. Moreover, subordinate commanders might adopt the habit of waiting for their superiors to act instead of acting on their own initiative. In the heat of battle when the principal commander might be too busy to continue his specific and detailed instructions to his juniors, a serious situation could develop.

5. The full capability of land-based air was not employed in the initial phase of the Leyte operation due to the fact that Allied airfields on the recently captured islands of Morotai and Anguar were not developed in time to lend full support with long range heavy bombers until late October. This difficulty resulted in part from advancing D-day for Leyte by two months, from December 20th to October 20th, thereby reducing considerably the time available prior to the landing date for air-

# LESSON:

In modern warfare ample communication facilities for the rapid transmission and delivery of operational dispatch traffic are essential to the proper exercise of command. The importance of this feature must be emphasized and a careful study be made to provide for guaranteeing secure and positive communications at all times, for any major operation of the future that does not have a workable communication plan is doomed to failure.

7. On October 19th COMTHIRDFLT, primarily as a result of three widely scattered contact reports of enemy naval task forces in the South China Sea and Makassar Strait, decided, in accordance with the principle of concentration and in view of the fact that Allied landings would occur the following day, to keep TF 38 intact so that he would have maximum strength available for any eventuality. He cancelled all existing orders for his task groups to retire to Ulithi and Manus for logistic replenishment, emergency upkeep and repairs, and rescinded his orders of the previous day to shift his battleships and carriers.

The above action by COMTHIRDFLT was naturally based on the premise that all three contact reports were valid. However, the only force that had been observed, and reported almost correctly by the TRIGGER, was the one consisting of four enemy heavy cruisers and five destroyers (Japanese SECOND Striking Force) off northern Formosa. The other two contacts, ostensibly on an enemy task force in Makassar Strait and another in the South China Sea, were neither properly identified nor evaluated. Three large vessels reported by the BREAM in Makassar Strait were not sighted visually, but had only appeared as three large blips on her radar screen, a fact that the BREAM had not included in her contact report.

In the South China Sea a FOURTEENTH Air Force search plane erroneously reported a convoy of merchant ships as a naval task force of one carrier, two cruisers and three destroyers. As a result of these incorrectly identified and evaluated contacts COMTHIRDFLT had made a momentous decision that cancelled his logistic replenishment and repair program and extended the operating period for his units, which might have had an adverse effect on his future operations.

LESSON:

Correct recognition, evaluation, and timely reporting of enemy forces must be stressed in view of the vital importance of such information to the commander, since the commander's thought processes, decisions and actions are guided by the information he receives.

8. An examination of the operation plans, orders, messages, and instructions of the majority of the Allied commanders associated with KING II reveals a universal estimate that enemy fleet reaction to the Leyte assault would be limited to the employment of his naval units, taking maximum advantage of weather, darkness, coastal hiding and land-based air, to (a) reinforce his garrison forces by using his naval forces in small detached units as high-speed armed transports to make "Tokyo Express" runs or (b) to attack Allied lines of communication. It was generally believed that the Japanese fleet would not oppose KING II by a major fleet action. This was so in spite of the fact that (a) Allied intelligence had indicated that the bulk of the enemy surface fleet was based in the Lingga-Singapore area, with its carriers in the Empire and (b) knowledge that a lodgement by the Allied forces in the Philippines would sever the enemy's vital supply lines between the Empire and the strategically important Malay Peninsula and Netherlands

Indies. The projected Allied seizure and occupation of Leyte thus threatened something that the enemy valued dearly, and therefore, from a standpoint of logical reasoning, he should protect it with maximum available forces, including his fleet.

The all-pervading conjecture that enemy naval reaction would be limited as above was based erroneously on enemy intentions rather than capabilities.

LESSON:

In preparing his estimate of the situation to derive logically the correct decision, the commander should not be exclusively interested in what the enemy may intend to do, or even in what the enemy may be known, at the time, to intend to do, since such intentions are subject to change. The commander is interested in everything that the enemy can do (enemy capabilities) which may influence materially the commander's own courses of action. A conclusion on an insufficient basis, that the enemy will or will not seek him out and engage him, or that the enemy will or will not do anything else, may result in most serious consequences for the commander.

9. In the Leyte operation, no arrangements were made to reconnoiter the Lingga-Singapore area either by the employment of B-29s from Ceylon or the Calcutta area or by the stationing of Allied submarines in the lower South China Sea, in spite of the fact that Allied intelligence had indicated that the major part of the Japanese fleet was located in this area. Perhaps the estimate that the enemy fleet would not sortie in force to oppose KING II was the reason for not reconnoitering this area. B-29s were available for support of this operation, and were deployed through advance bases in China to make three attacks against Formosa.



(b) Instructions contained in previous operation plans or orders should first be evaluated to ascertain whether or not they still apply, before repeating them verbatim in later plans or orders.

(c) All forces assigned to or participating in any major operation should be governed by the same overall objective.

2. Information concerning the operations in support of the Leyte operation by Allied Air Forces SOWESPAC was incomplete. No plans or orders of AAF SOWESPAC were received, and without knowledge of the organization, strength, location, units, status or capacity of bases it was difficult to estimate what support might be expected. For example, on October 17th, CTF 77 originated a request to CAAF SOWESPAC for a report of previous and intended air strikes against Mindanao, and as of D-day he still had received no reply. The nature and progress of the supporting operations on the southern flank of the objective area were of vital importance to both COMSOWESPAC and CTF 77 at this time, since concentrations of enemy aircraft in this area might have jeopardized the success of the landings.

The value of some searches and contact reports was lessened because the originators' call signs were not held. Expressions of air intent were difficult to interpret because of code terminology meaningless to the recipient.

LESSON:

Coordinate commanders assigned supporting roles for any major operation or campaign must keep one another informed as to matters of mutual concern, the method and means by which they intend to fulfill their re-

## BATTLE LESSONS

1. CINCPAC in his orders to COMTHIRDFLT gave as his general plan that the Pacific Ocean Area Forces would cover and support the forces of the Southwest Pacific Area. He directed, in addition, in paragraph 3(x), that, in case opportunity for destruction of a major portion of the enemy offered or could be created, such destruction becomes the primary task. It was not necessary to obtain the concurrence of COMSOWESPAC, nor was it necessary for COMTHIRDFLT, for example, whose assigned task was to destroy enemy naval and air forces in or threatening the Philippines area, to inform that commander should he desire to discontinue his present operations in favor of a fleet action with a major portion of the enemy fleet. On October 15th, COMTHIRDFLT believed that a situation similar to the above was developing. Although not necessary to do so, he notified CTF 77 and COMSOWESPAC that he would be unable to provide fast carrier support for the seizure of the Philippines until further notice, discontinued his covering operations (air strikes against Formosa and the Philippines), and deployed his forces for battle, thus placing COMSOWESPAC in what might have been an untenable position.

### LESSON:

The duty of a covering force commander is to provide cover for the designated forces. During the course of the operation and so long as a covering force is required, he should have no other primary task. Should circumstances arise in which it may appear that he can contribute materially to the general effort by executing a task other than covering, approval of such a change prior

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to its execution should, in general, first be obtained from the commander of the force being covered, or, at the very least, the commander of the force being covered should be advised at the earliest opportunity of the change in plans.

However, failure to obtain such permission or failure to advise of the change in plans should not prevent the covering force commander from taking any action deemed necessary because of the demands of the situation.

2. Prior to the Battle for Leyte Gulf, the Japanese High Command (Imperial GHQ) had made very comprehensive plans for defense of the areas considered vital (SHO plans). CinC, Combined Fleet's plans, which were derived from GHQ's plans, provided for meeting an expected Allied amphibious invasion in a decisive battle at the time of landing at the point of landing, employing the coordinated effort of all available forces. These plans, which appear to have been basically sound within Japanese capabilities, provided for conserving the strength of the Base Air Forces by retiring these forces into less dangerous areas until the time of "the decisive battle." One minor provision of the plans, however, did permit the Base Air Forces operating alone to engage in all-out offensive operations should an opportunity arise whereby the enemy task force (carrier force) could thus be destroyed. This provision, which was made effective by CinC, Combined Fleet on October 12th, caused the Base Air Forces to be dissipated in ineffective operations prior to the time for the activation of the SHO operations.

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LESSON:

A commander, once having made a basic plan, must of necessity supervise its execution. Where, after proper consideration, a change appears to be indicated, he should have no hesitancy in making the change or, if necessary, in abandoning the plan. On the other hand, he should not make undesirable departures from the plan since they involve a corresponding penalty and unless duly justified by the situation increase the possibility of failure.

3. COMSEVENTHFLT, who was also Commander Naval Forces SOWESPAC designated himself as CTF 77 (Commander Philippines Attack Force) in his plans for the Leyte Campaign. Thus he operated on three different echelons of command. This required that, while being responsible for all naval activities in the entire Southwest Pacific Area, he was at the same time directly responsible for the tactical features of the naval operations within Leyte Gulf. This could have resulted in his becoming so engrossed in the tactical features of the landing operations as to overlook possibly his basic responsibilities as CANFSOWESPAC and COMSEVENTHFLT.

LESSON:

There are many occasions when a commander can command on several different echelons in an effective manner. This is particularly true for small forces in peacetime operations. However, it is not recommended (a) for wartime operations, (b) for combatant tasks groups which may engage the enemy, and (c) for operations where the commander is commanding forces on both the strategical and tactical echelons; that is, where he has large responsibilities in the

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strategical field and must at the same time operate in the swift-moving phases of a tactical engagement as well.

This is so because (a) in the case of the strategical commander his responsibilities concerning the movements of all forces such as aircraft and submarines not only in support of the tactical engagements which may develop, but also in support of the strategical plan--of which the tactical plans may be but a small part--are very vital to the success of the whole, and (b) in the case of the combatant task group commander his responsibilities are also so vital to the success of the action that he must devote his time and mind exclusively to them and cannot be expected to devote his attention to other matters.

4. COMSEVENTHFLT, in his orders to the SEVENTH Fleet submarines, directed that they were to operate in support of the Leyte campaign. He also directed that they were to continue the present operations against shipping to the fullest extent practicable. As a consequence, some submarines, which might have been deployed more advantageously to provide early information of enemy movements, were deployed to continue anti-shipping operations. CTF 17 in like manner assigned anti-shipping operations to many of his submarines, notably to the submarines operating in the Nansei Shoto-Formosa areas. This prevented the correct deployment of Allied submarines to prevent the undetected sortie of the enemy forces from the Empire, as well as to give prompt and early warning of the approach of enemy forces towards the objective area.

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LESSON:

Submarine anti-shipping operations are strategical in concept and do not normally have an immediate effect on the local situation. Therefore, it follows that submarines should properly be detached from such anti-shipping operations when they are required for tactical operations which will have an immediate effect on the local situation. This is particularly true when such employment is necessary for the security of the tactical forces involved.

In addition, a commander, in assigning tasks to his subordinates, should avoid assigning two or more tasks to the same command without an indication of priority, whether in importance or in sequence. This is particularly true when the accomplishment of one task can be done only to the detriment of the other tasks.

It has been found advantageous to list the principal task first and then to list the other tasks in the order of their importance. However, it has also been found advantageous to list the tasks chronologically (i.e., in the order of their execution). The commander is at liberty, of course, to employ either method according to its helpfulness in enabling him to visualize the elements of his problem.

5. Most Allied plans for the Leyte operation were based on the assumption that major elements of the Japanese fleet would not be involved in opposition to the Allied landings at Leyte. This was so despite the Allied knowledge that strong enemy fleet units were available for such operations. This basic assumption was the result of a study of enemy intentions, with relatively little

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weight being given to those enemy capabilities which might have adversely affected the Allied plans. It appears to have had a detrimental effect on Allied planning in that it not only adversely affected the dispositions of the Allied submarines, but also so affected the scope of the Allied air searches that searches which should properly have been made, such as an aerial reconnaissance of the Lingga-Singapore area, were not made.

LESSON:

A commander, in making his plans, should follow the method of enemy capabilities rather than the method of enemy intentions. The method of enemy intentions, which has been discarded by the United States armed forces, as the enemy's intentions are subject to change, but which is still used by certain important navies, consisted of an estimate by the commander, based on that course of action which he thought, or even knew, the enemy intended to follow. The method of capabilities consists of an estimate by the commander based on those courses of action of which the enemy is capable and which, if adopted, will materially affect the accomplishment of the commander's objectives. He should, where possible, list the enemy courses of action in order of priority; that is, he should list the more likely before the less likely. In case of doubt, he should give the higher priority to those enemy courses which he considers more dangerous to himself.

6. Commander THIRD Fleet, while operating in close proximity to Japan, did not launch searches which would have disclosed whether or not an enemy surface force had sortied from the Empire. He

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failed to make these searches despite the fact that he realized that the deployment of TF 17 submarines in the vicinity of the Japanese Empire did not provide adequate security against such a possibility. While it is a fact that no Japanese forces of consequence, other than the SECOND Striking Force, sortied during this period, and while it is also a fact that TF 17 submarines detected the SECOND Striking Force when it sortied on October 15th, the importance of insuring that TF 38 was provided with adequate early warning of enemy sorties necessitated that the limited submarine reconnaissance operations off Bungo Suido, Kii Suido and Tokyo Bay be implemented by searches from TF 38 itself. This was not done. There were sufficient planes in TF 38 to have provided such a search without detracting unduly from its offensive power. While the strength of TF 38 was such that it could undoubtedly have destroyed any surface force which the enemy was capable of assembling, such an enemy force, by exploiting surprise and concentration, might have inflicted considerable unnecessary damage before being destroyed.

LESSON:

Security requires that all steps practicable be taken to determine the location, composition and movement of those enemy forces which are capable of interfering with or of endangering own forces or of interfering with the accomplishment of the basic plan.

7. On October 16th, COMTHIRDFLT launched an extensive search to contact the SECOND Striking Force. Contact was made by a BUNKER HILL search plane at 1425, but in relaying the information to the

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OTC (Officer in Tactical Command), the contact, although reported by both radio and voice transmission, became so confused and garbled that it was not clear what had been sighted, how many contacts had been made, nor where they had been made. This was due in part to the fact that the contact report was relayed incorrectly by several other planes. A very confused picture was thereby presented to the commander which delayed him about one hour and thirty-five minutes (until 1600) and prevented him from launching an afternoon strike against the SECOND Striking Force.

LESSON:

Probably few naval operations in which a very few personnel are involved can have more far-reaching effects on a tactical situation than the reporting of contacts with the enemy. Therefore, no more important duty exists than that of obtaining and delivering to the OTC information of the enemy forces. Such information must get through correctly and with the minimum possible delay.

It is particularly important that contact reports of enemy ships as well as of enemy aircraft in position to threaten the principal forces be made as soon as possible. Detailed, accurate information of the enemy should be provided, and this should include the enemy's bearing and distance from a geographical point, or his latitude and longitude; his disposition or formation; the number of his units and their course and speed. The senior officer of ships within visual touch of each other at the point of contact is not only responsible that the information is transmitted to the proper officer, but he is also responsible for preventing unnecessary duplication of reports by the ships in visual contact

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with him. However, when a junior observes that his senior appears unable to transmit information because of damage or other reasons, he, the junior, should assume that duty.

It is often wise to parallel a voice transmission with a radio transmission or even in some cases by visual means. Whether or not to employ radio when other proper means of transmitting a contact report are available is a command decision based on the need for radio security against the possibility of a failure in the communication system.

Correct and detailed instructions for making reports of contact with the enemy are contained in currently effective fleet publications, and personnel must be constantly drilled in this vital matter.

8." During the seven days of the air battle between the Japanese land-based aircraft and the American carrier-based aircraft, the Japanese launched 1182 combat sorties, not including search and reconnaissance planes, against TF 38. Many of these planes failed to reach their targets owing to bad weather, poor navigation, mechanical failures and the effectiveness of the carrier combat air patrols. Of those which reached the target many were shot down by the AA guns of the task force. As a consequence, the Japanese planes made but six hits. Three of these were damaging torpedo hits; two on the HOUSTON and one on the CANBERRA, forcing both ships out of action. Two were glancing bomb hits of little importance; one on the HANCOCK and one on the FRANKLIN. One was a kamikaze hit, also of little importance, on the FRANKLIN.

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During this same period TF 38 launched 4026 combat sorties-- not including search, reconnaissance and photographic planes-- against the Nansei Shoto, Formosa and Luzon. The great majority of these sorties reached their targets and accomplished great damage to Japanese planes and air facilities and some damage to Japanese shipping and shipping facilities.

In these operations (a) the Japanese lost about 965 aircraft of all types, of which about 575 planes were destroyed in the air and 390 on the ground, and (b) the Americans (TF 38) lost about 137 planes of all types, of which about ninety-three planes were lost in the air and about forty-four were jettisoned.

LESSON:

The above results show that during the preliminary phases of the Battle for Leyte Gulf Japanese land-based aircraft was entirely ineffective against the highly maneuverable, strongly defended American carrier task force, TF 38, and was also entirely ineffective in repelling American carrier-based air attacks against Japanese land positions. On the other hand, American carrier-based aircraft was very effective both against Japanese land-based aircraft and against Japanese land defenses.

This comparison demonstrates the advantages which may accrue to aircraft operating from a moving base against a fixed target, over land-based aircraft operating against a highly mobile and heavily defended target, and indicates that in a future war carrier-based aircraft may once again prove thoroughly effective in similar situations.

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9. During the Battle off Formosa, the FIFTH and SIXTH Base Air Forces were ordered to destroy TF 38. It does not appear that either commander made any effort to coordinate the operations of these two forces. Each base air force commander attacked without regard for the operations of the other and each one made no attempt to attack in coordination with the other. As a result, the air strikes made on TF 38 were smaller than would have been the case had the base air forces exerted a joint effort; consequently, they were less effective. Under the Japanese command organization existing, only CinC, Combined Fleet could have coordinated these operations. He appears neither to have done so nor to have required joint attacks by his base air forces.

Further, although there is evidence that some of the strikes made by the SIXTH Base Air Force were intended to be coordinated strikes by fighters, bombers and torpedo planes, such coordination was not effected. In some cases this was due to weather, but this was not generally so. In the later phases of the battle, air strikes were made in small groups with no attempt at coordination. As a result, these strikes were made in piecemeal fashion and the advantages which might have been derived by saturation of the defenses of TF 38 were lost.

LESSON:

Attacking air groups should be coordinated so that the maximum effective blow may be delivered against the enemy. Piecemeal strikes in small, ineffective groups can only result in the attrition of the air groups with little or no damage to the enemy.

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A coordinated attack with bombs, rockets, torpedoes, and machine gun fire, and in sufficient numbers to divide and confuse the defense is more effective than attack by many small groups not at the same time but so that defending aircraft and AA can dispose of each group in succession. There must be intensive joint training between services so that they may learn how best to support one another's operations.

The size of a coordinated air strike is generally limited by the number of aircraft available and by the number of aircraft which can be operated together effectively in the objective area, although it may also be limited by other considerations.

10. On October 10th, CinC Combined Fleet ordered Commander Mobile Force to shorebase all operational aircraft of CARDIV's THREE and FOUR, and on October 12th he ordered them to reported to Commander SIXTH Base Air Force for duty. He did this because he did not consider that the air groups as a whole were trained adequately for carrier-based combat operations, although he well knew that an appreciable percentage of them could have operated continuously from the carriers and that the remainder could have taken off for at least one attack and then proceeded to a shore base. Thereafter, Commander SIXTH Base Air Force employed them as a part of his base air force, operating them first from southern Kyushu and later from Formosa. By designating these carrier planes for land-based operations, CinC, Combined Fleet in large measure eliminated what combat effectiveness his carriers had as aircraft carriers.

LESSON:

Carriers and their attached aircraft are of vital importance

in modern warfare in that they provide striking forces of concentrated striking power, flexibility of operations and weapons, and high mobility. When their aircraft have been removed for shore-based operations, as was done by the Japanese at Leyte, the carriers automatically lose both their striking power and the flexibility of operations and weapons. They retain, however, their high mobility and can be employed for various operations of limited scope, such as decoys, but they can no longer be employed as striking forces.

Generally speaking, their aircraft are not as efficient as land-based aircraft because they must of necessity have certain characteristics required for carrier operations. However, under favorable circumstances, this lack of comparative efficiency is more than compensated for by the advantage of operating from a mobile base. It should be clear then, that when carrier aircraft are operated from shore bases they thereby are deprived of their greatest asset, the mobility of their base.

It is important, therefore, that whenever practicable carrier aircraft, even of limited capabilities, are retained on board the carriers and are not deployed in land-based operations. If they are so deployed, it is highly probable that neither the carriers nor the aircraft are being employed effectively.

11. There was a marked tendency on the part of the Japanese pilots to claim own forces had inflicted much more extensive damage and many more sinkings than had in fact occurred. This applied to both aircraft and ships, and was particularly true of the pilots

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of the SIXTH Base Air Force. It was especially noticeable (a) on October 12th when the Japanese claimed having set ten ships afire, of which four, presumed to be carriers, had sunk, when in fact they had accomplished no damage whatsoever to any ships of TF 38, and (b) on October 13th when the Japanese claimed having sunk three carriers and one cruiser, having probably sunk one battleship and having set two carriers afire, when in fact they had solely torpedoed the CANBERRA and had slightly damaged the FRANKLIN.

It is not known whether these claims were pure fabrications or whether they were incorrect because of the strength of the Allied defense, which made it impossible for the Japanese flyers to obtain a correct estimate of damage inflicted. It is possible that both of these factors adversely affected the Japanese claims.

LESSON:

The accuracy of a pilot's observations when engaged in combat appears to vary inversely with the intensity of the defense; that is, the stronger the defense the less accurate the observations are likely to be. It follows, therefore, that every pilot's observations, particularly those of positions strongly defended or of naval forces, should be supported by photographs taken during and after the attack as actual proof of damage. Whenever practicable, the pilot's observations should also be supplemented by those of a trained observer not required to engage in combat.

Accurate knowledge of an enemy's losses has an importance considerably beyond that of reflecting credit on own forces and own commanders, for no commander can make correct decisions in battle nor yet learn and apply its lessons to future tactics

without knowing how successful he has been in damaging the enemy. It is important to realize that over-estimation of enemy losses may work definite harm in the following ways:

(a) It may warp the immediate judgment of commanders in battle. It should be apparent that, should a commander have an erroneous belief as to the number of enemy units destroyed and the number still remaining, he may fail to press home or to repeat an attack, or to finish off cripples, or to pursue fugitives and cut off their escape. He may permit enemy vessels left supposedly sinking to survive and escape; he may relax his guard against enemy units which are apparently disabled but which are actually still dangerous, or which have disappeared only to reform, rearm, and re-attack.

(b) It may hinder tactical advancement. If a commander believes that he has been highly successful and has inflicted heavy losses on the enemy when the contrary is actually the case, he may fail to remedy weaknesses and to make improvements in material, training, and tactics.

(c) It may affect own long range strategy, which of necessity is based largely on an analysis of the enemy's strength with relation to own strength. This, in turn, is affected by the accuracy of own estimate of previous enemy losses.

12. There were several instances where delays in launching the SIXTH Base Air Force's morning searches were permitted. This resulted in decreasing the effectiveness of the searches.



LESSON:

The effectiveness of a sector search is based on the assumption that the search planes will progress uniformly through the sector. This is true whether or not the sector searches are conducted from a single base or are conducted in coordination from two or more bases. It should be clear that when the search planes are not progressing uniformly through their sectors it is possible for enemy units to move from an area which has not been searched into another area which has already been searched, and thereby escape detection.

It therefore follows that, should a subordinate be unable to carry out effectively a search for which he is responsible, he should, whenever practicable, immediately inform his immediate superior in command in order that that officer may take any steps made necessary by the demands of the situation.

13. Despite the fact that CinC, Combined Fleet had laid down detailed instructions for the tracking of enemy contacts, including the use of special tracking teams, such tracking was not accomplished. As a result, the commanders concerned were not currently informed of the enemy situation and it was necessary to reestablish contacts prior to successive attacks. The failure to maintain contacts was in a large part responsible for the large numbers of attack planes which were unable to locate targets.

LESSON:

Once contact with an enemy force has been made, it is essential that a commander keep himself informed of its location in

order that he may effectively use his own forces in attack, or if need be, in order that he may effect timely retirement. While it must be recognized that tracking a powerful force such as TF 38 might have been a costly operation, the information which could have been gained from tracking planes would have been of inestimable value. Had tracking information been available, it would not have been necessary to reestablish contact before each attack, and the search planes required to reestablish contact would have been available for attack.

14. Both the Japanese and Allied commands suffered because there was no unified command of the various forces involved. Instead, some of the major forces were under different area or theater commanders, and operated through coordination and cooperation.

(1) On the Japanese side, CinC, Combined Fleet commanded the major portion of the naval forces (the mobile fleets and base air forces) and had operational control of the army air forces in the Nansei Shoto and Formosa areas. He had no control over the army air forces in the Philippines, and no control over army ground troops in the Nansei Shoto, Formosa or Philippines. The army air forces in the Philippines, which were independent of the ground troop commanders, were under C.G. FOURTH Air Army; the army ground troops in the Philippines were under their area army commanders. All were under the command of the CinC, Southern Army. Disagreements between CinC, Combined Fleet and CinC, Southern Army were of necessity resolved by Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo, since that headquarters was the immediate superior of both commanders.

(2) On the Allied side, COMSOWESPAC commanded his own ground troops as well as his own air and naval forces, with the result that disagreements between these commands within SOWESPAC could be resolved immediately by COMSOWESPAC. This same situation obtained within CINCPOA. However, forces in CINCPOA, such as the THIRD Fleet, ordered in support of COMSOWESPAC, did not operate directly under COMSOWESPAC but instead operated under CINCPOA. Disagreements between COMTHIRDFLT and COMSEVENTHFLT, for example, could not be resolved directly between them but were of necessity resolved by CINCPOA and COMSOWESPAC or, failing here, by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

LESSON:

A commander designated to command an operation should be given operational control over all forces assigned for that operation. If such operational control cannot be obtained, then he should be authorized to communicate directly with all responsible commands in order to insure that all orders, reports and other information vital to the successful conduct of operations get through with the minimum possible delay.

The selection of the commander to command an operation should be based on the principle of paramount interest.

15. CinC, Combined Fleet was seriously handicapped in the execution of his assigned tasks by lack of strategical intelligence regarding Allied movements. His estimate of Allied capabilities was reasonably correct, his estimate of the probable employment of Allied carrier task forces prior to an attempted landing in the

Philippines was likewise reasonably correct. However, his information on Allied invasion forces was not only scanty, but was incorrect.

This, when considered with the exaggerated claims of his pilots, caused CinC, Combined Fleet to arrive at an erroneous opinion as to the nature of the Allied operations.

LESSON:

Without early and adequate intelligence of enemy forces, their strength, locations and movements, a commander may be unable to deploy correctly his own forces in sufficient time and in sufficient strength to accomplish his objectives.